

Tennessee Weighs in On Healthcare

Throughout the summer, I've heard from a lot of people concerned about the President's so-called health care reform agenda or H.R. 3200 proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives. Whenever I turn on the television, I see the same concerns being raised throughout Tennessee and all over the country. Health care reform will affect all of us and regardless of one's party affiliation, everyone wants his or her voice heard on the matter.

At roundtable discussions and at town hall meetings in East Tennessee, I have personally heard your discontent and distress over this health care legislation. Just last week the President was thought to have changed his mind about including the public option because of statements he made at a town hall meeting. However, the next day the White House communicated that the public option was still preferred by the President and he was not taking it off the table.

How do the American people feel about this? According to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll, the public confidence in President Obama's leadership has declined sharply over the summer because of intensifying opposition to his preferred health care overhaul. Among all Americans surveyed, 49% express confidence that Obama will make the right decisions for the country, down from 60% at the 100-day mark in his presidency. Forty-nine percent say they think he will be able to spearhead significant improvements, down nearly 20 percentage points from before he took office.

What has been missing from the health care debate is the issue of medical malpractice reform, which in my view is one of the key steps we need to take to control costs. The President's efforts have focused on controlling provider payments, which will lower costs but also limit the availability of physicians. By addressing medical malpractice reform, we can eliminate the hidden costs of defensive medicine and slow the growth of health insurance premiums because of slower growth in medical malpractice insurance. Containing costs and capping runaway spending we see in Congress is vital, and neglecting to contain costs in a health care bill or any other piece of legislation will be detrimental.

The President has stated his preference for H.R. 3200 to be deficit-neutral over the next 10 years, but this obscures the more concerning issue that after 10 years, the program will cause unsustainable deficits that will either force significant rationing or significant tax increases. Why do deficits matter? Well, the Congressional Budget Office on August 25 released deficit figures that showed \$7.1 trillion of new debt over the next 10 years, and that's before the President's health care proposal is added. When the Office of Management and Budget - the Administration's own budget office - calculated the deficit estimates and took into account the effects of the President's policies, they estimated \$9 trillion of new debt over the next 10 years. Clearly, that is simply something this country cannot afford to do. We saw this happen in Tennessee with TennCare, which almost bankrupted the state.

These figures further are evidence that spending has rapidly run out of control in Congress – placing a high burden on our children and grandchildren. We are creating tremendous debt that will only further increase if this trillion-dollar health legislation is pushed through Congress. These projections are a high threat to our economic and national security. Congress needs to immediately rein in the spending and start acting more responsibly. I want to see true reform in Congress, including health care and runaway spending.

One other concern I have about the legislation as written is the President's insistence that those of us who believe his plan will increase the number of abortions is "false" and his charge that this concern is being spread by "people who are bearing false witness." It was disappointing that the President would respond in such an inaccurate manner. In fact, the nonpartisan website FactCheck.org looked into both sides claim and found that the President wasn't being up front. I encourage you to read the report at <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/08/abortion-which-side-is-fabricating/>

will always vote that way. You can check my voting record from the National Right to Life Committee at <http://nrlc.www.capwiz.com/nrlc/bio/id/51685#>.

Please feel free to contact my office if we can be of assistance to you or your family. You can contact my office by mail, email or phone.